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Suspects Charged with Online Sale of Alcohol

Law Enforcement Agents from The Alcoholic Beverage Commission conduct statewide sting operations targeting online sale of liquor.

Seventeen suspects have been charged with illegal sales of alcoholic beverages resulting from statewide sting operations targeting online ads on Craigslist and other social media outlets. Agents seized sixty-nine bottles of alcohol that were sold to them during the undercover operations which took place on street corners, parking lots, and places of business.

Tennessee Alcoholic Beverage Commission (TABC) Executive Director Clay Byrd cautions consumers of the inherent dangers of buying or selling beer, wine, or spirits through social media or unlicensed online marketplaces.

"Our agency has seen an increase in website and social media posts where buyers and sellers engage in illegal, unlicensed sale of alcohol," said Executive Director Clay Byrd. "Any sales outside Tennessee's regulatory structure and permitting process are not only illegal but could also pose a significant and unknown health risk."

Without proper permits and licenses, unscrupulous sellers may produce fake or otherwise counterfeit products and sell these products to unsuspecting consumers. It is impossible for an alcohol manufacturer to guarantee the integrity of their product if it is sold outside the regulatory framework provided in federal and state law.

Youth access is another major concern for the TABC with unlicensed online transactions. Law enforcement agents from the Tennessee Alcoholic Beverage Commission spend a great deal of time protecting our youth by preventing the sale of alcohol to minors. Social media and unlicensed online marketplaces are extremely difficult to monitor since the exchange of products do not occur in a licensed location. The TABC hopes the information contained in this release will help educate parents about illegal alcohol sales to help protect the state's youth.

In addition to the many public safety concerns, the illegal sale of alcoholic beverages results in tax evasion, which harms the economic interests of the state and creates an unfair burden for businesses that operate within the parameters of the law.

Illegal sales of alcohol can result in criminal penalties for sellers and for buyers. Consumers who see social media or other online posts for alcohol or suspect illegal alcohol sales activity should contact the TABC at 615-741-1602. For more information on state alcohol laws, please visit the TABC's legal resources webpage: <https://www.tn.gov/abc/legal-resources.html>.

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